DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 081 SO 008 159

AUTHOR	Hawke, Sharryl
TITLE	Newspaper in the Classroom. Profiles of Promise 40.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Boulder, Colo.; Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., Boulder, Colo.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	[75]
NOTE	5p.; For related documents see ED 077 992, 078 382, 080 409, and 085 735
AVAILABLE FROM	Social Science Education Consortium, 855 Broadway, Boulder, Colorado 80302 ($9.00 for 30 issues)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Demonstration Programs; Elementary Education; Evaluation; Instructional Materials; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Learning Activities; *Newspapers; Program Descriptions; *Social Studies; Special Education; *Teaching Techniques
IDENTIFIERS	Newspaper in the Classroom; NIC; *Profiles of Promise

ABSTRACT

Newspapers are extensively used as the primary source material in all classes at Emerson Elementary School, Granite City, Illinois. Textbooks and other resources are used to supplement the daily issues of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat received at the school. Learning activities and the role of the newspaper vary in each classroom. The newspaper's use is limited only by the teacher's imagination. Teachers sometimes use the newspaper as a major instructional tool while at other times they use it as an enrichment and motivational technique. Students use all aspects of the newspaper from headlines to advertisements, sports statistics, and current articles. For example, a number of students in a fifth grade class play the market each day. A Trans World Airline advertisement is used in kindergarden classes to identify airlines that are alike and those that are different. A primary group uses the same ad for studying arrival and departure times and drawing the times on faces of clocks. Special education, music, and art teachers also find the newspaper useful. An evaluation of the program indicates that it is successful. Using the information presented, interested teachers can adapt this program into their own curriculum. (Author/JR)

ED102081

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Newspaper in the Classroom

Sitting down with a cup of coffee and a newspaper is not just a relaxing way to start the day for teachers at Emerson Elementary School in Granite City, Illinois. While Emerson teachers read the morning news, they are also formulating plans for teaching their classes that day. Lessons, activities, and assignments are all inspired by what they find in the paper. When the first bell rings, the teachers are ready with a fresh, timely curriculum for their students.

Incorporating the newspaper into classroom teaching is not a new idea, but most schools use newspapers only to enrich textbook teaching. At Emerson the newspaper is the primary source material; textbooks and other resources are used to supplement the daily issues of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat received at the school.

In the two years Newspaper in the Classroom, NIC, has been used at Emerson, the approach has gained wide favor among teachers, students, and parents. Alfred Wilson, Emerson's principal, cites improved student attitudes, better attendance, reduced discipline problems, enriched curriculum, and increased student-parent dialogue as results of the NIC program.

NEWSPAPERS IN EMERSON CLASSROOMS

While the concept of using newspapers in the classroom seems simple at first glance, implementing the practice on a day-to-day basis is more complex. At Emerson the "textbooks" arrive each morning when some 330 *Globe-Democrat* newspapers are delivered to the school and distributed to classrooms. This delivery provides a newspaper for every student in grades K through 6.

As students come into the classroom, they pick up their copy of the paper and head for their desks. Many teachers give students a 15 to 20 minute free-reading period to glance through the paper and read their favorite sections; teachers feel this routine encourages students to develop a habit of daily newspaper reading. After the free-reading period, class work begins. A tour of Emerson classrooms on a typical day would demonstrate the variety and creativity fostered by the NIC approach.

In the kindergarten class, both teacher and pupils are delighted to find a two-page T.W.A. advertisement featuring pictures of many airplanes. Kindergartners are given the task of identifying the planes that are alike and those that are different. Children cut out other pictures in the paper to study shapes. The large-type headlines are used for finding alphabet letters and counting numbers. There is a line drawing in one advertisement which makes a good coloring picture.

Primary grade youngsters are finding just as many activities in their papers. First-grade students who are able to read the headlines discover the rhyming words "jail" and "bail." The teacher asks them to name other words that fit the rhyming sequence. Second graders are practicing writing their addresses and phone numbers by filling in a coupon found in an advertisement.

The primary grade students are interested in the same T.W.A. advertisement used by the kindergartners, but they are studying the arrival and departure times in the ad. Youngsters draw the times on the face of a paper clock in a time-telling exercise. Prices in a supermarket ad make good addition and subtraction problems.

Teachers in the third and fourth grades know their pupils like the comic strips, so they are using the comics for language arts lessons. One student says her favorite activity is "rewriting the 'bubbles' of the comics," a task which teaches both punctuation and word usage. Students also look for contractions in advertisements, nouns in front-page headlines, and verbs in the sports news.

The multi-purpose T.W.A. advertisement is being used by the middle graders too. This time, the ad becomes a geography lesson as students locate the airline's destination points on classroom maps.

The newspaper is full of current event topics. Social studies on this day includes a discussion of drugs, a topic prompted by an article on the local drug situation. A lesson in consumer buying is combined with practice in math as students use the prices quoted in local ads to determine the cost per unit of various items. Sports enthusiasts among the youngsters enjoy adding and subtracting the columns of scores from the weekend football games.

Fifth and sixth graders are interested in an article on the voting record of local congressmen and senators. They use the statistics quoted in the article to draw circle graphs. A number of students have developed a continuing interest in the stock market and use the newspaper's quotations to "play" the market each day.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Feature columns in the paper, when cut out and collected, provide a new kind of textbook for the students. The "Ask Andy" column supplies students with information on scientific topics varying from how marble is formed to space exploration. A daily health column exposes students to a wide range of health subjects.

Older youngsters are quite interested in the political cartoon they find on the editorial page. The resulting assignment is to write an essay on the meaning of the cartoon. The task sends many youngsters to their classroom resource textbooks to find more information on the political significance of the donkey and the elephant in the picture.

Special Education students are not left out of the classroom newspaper program. In fact, their teacher finds the newspaper very motivating for students with learning problems; the newspaper represents "real life" to the students and they are proud to use it. They look up numbers to read their daily horoscopes, an activity which not only helps them read numbers but also develops much needed hand-eye coordination. Students also read the food section and cut out pictures to show how to plan a balanced meal.

Even art and music teachers find the newspaper a source of much activity. A travel article and photographs may inspire a budding artist to recreate the scene. A front page write-up on flooding conditions in the Mississippi valley brings much more meaning to the singing of "Old Man River."

Teachers at Emerson find the possibilities for using the paper almost endless. The variety and diversity of learning activities provided in a newspaper make each day a new challenge for students and teachers alike. The Emerson staff feels the newspaper approach brings a spontaneity and timeliness to the classroom which "textbooks can never match."

INITIATING THE NIC APPROACH

The originator and prime mover behind the Newspaper in the Classroom program is the principal, Al Wilson. He actually conceived the idea some 12 years ago when he was a sixth-grade teacher at another elementary school in Granite City. In using newspapers as a supplementary source in his classroom teaching, Wilson noticed the interest they generated among students and wondered if they could be put to more use.

During the 1965-66 school year, Wilson conducted a controlled experiment to determine just how effective the newspaper was in student achievement. For one school year Wilson used the newspaper as the primary textbook for all subjects studied by his sixth graders; a control group of sixth graders used a traditional curriculum. At the end of the year both groups were tested with the SRA Achievement Test.

The results were impressive. The students using the newspaper tested at an academic achievement level of 6-9, sixth year, ninth month; the students in the unexposed group attained a level of 6-5. The difference was statistically significant. Broken down into sections, the test results showed the newspaper group outscored their counterparts in social studies, language arts, and arithmetic. There was no difference in the groups on reading scores, and science was the only area in which the unexposed group outscored the newspaper group. During the time period studied, the unexposed group had been instructed with educational television in their science class.

Based on the results of this experiment, Wilson maintained his interest in the concept of NIC after he became principal at Emerson, a Title I school. In his fifth year as the school's administrator, he proposed using the newspaper program on a school-wide basis.

Wilson recalls there was some initial hesitancy on the part of the staff in undertaking the program, but they agreed to give it a three-month trial. As it turned out, it took only three weeks for the teachers to become convinced of the program's effectiveness. "Since then," Wilson states, "the success of the program has depended on the staff's enthusiasm and creativity in using the concept."

In selecting his staff, Wilson chose people he felt would be flexible and innovative. The basic staff of 12, plus other part-time employees, were all creative in their own way before the implementation of NIC. Now each teacher adapts the newspaper approach to his student's needs and his own style of teaching.

Scenes from Emerson Classrooms . . .

Reading is fun when it's the comics

Finding the word the teacher a

Looking up a word's meaning

A question arises

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

...acher asks for

Adding the baseball scores

Using the text and newspaper together

PROGRAM EVALUATION

After two years the Emerson staff is pleased with the results of the NIC program. SRA standardized tests given to the students last spring indicated that the average score for each class from kindergarten through the sixth grade showed an achievement gain of a full year and in some cases as much as a year and a half.

Wilson carefully points out that Emerson students did not fare as well on the California Test of Basic Skills given to all students in Granite City. First and third graders scored as well as the city average, but fifth and sixth graders did not. The Emerson staff is not certain how to account for the test's outcome.

Teachers do feel that no test can fully indicate the extent of learning going on at Emerson. Daily reading of the newspaper has given the students a remarkable familiarity with current events and the world around them. As expressed by Jack Farrow, a fourth grade teacher, "A test doesn't even know about these things. It was compiled four years before any of them happened."

Students have also gained in self-confidence as a result of their "real-life" curriculum. One young man states, "I like doing math from the newspaper because the problems are real, and we are doing the same thing that grownups are doing." Another sixth-grade youngster says, "The newspaper has made me a better student, because I now help a seventh grader with her homework." Wilson doubts this is really true but notes, "If she thinks she is better, then the newspaper is having a positive result."

Teachers and students both feel the newspaper in the classroom has brought an enthusiasm for learning to Emerson, an enthusiasm that was lacking before the program began. On the few occasions when newspapers were not delivered, students voiced vigorous complaints. Even the hard-to-motivate students such as the mentally handicapped have responded well to the newspaper idea. Mary Kesnar, special education teacher, says her students are "excited because each day their textbook is different." She adds, "Believe me, getting these kids excited about learning is an accomplishment."

How do parents feel about the program? Judging from the letters to the editor in the local newspaper and personal feedback to faculty members, they are as enthusiastic as their children. One parent expressed her support by saying, "Mealtime has taken on a totally new dimension at our house now. We sit and have such interesting discussions. It has brought our family closer together as we seem to communicate so much more."

The program has not been in effect long enough to thoroughly evaluate students' adjustment in junior high after leaving Emerson. However, interviews with the seventh grade teachers indicate that the former students are doing quite well. One teacher noted that although some of the Emerson students were average in skills, they were much broader in their general knowledge and interests than other students.

NIC: MAKING IT WORK

As word of Emerson's Newspaper in the Classroom approach circulates among educators, the staff of the school is often asked to conduct workshops for other teachers in the use of NIC. During these discussions Wilson describes what it takes to implement an NIC program in a school.

The first requirement, as he sees it, is a flexible, imaginative staff. A staff must be open to the idea of trying a new approach and be willing to give it a fair trial. In addition, the staff must display some imagination in making the program work. Using a daily newspaper rather than a textbook means that long-range lesson plans cannot be drawn; what is taught depends on what the morning newspaper brings.

While stressing spontaneity, Wilson also notes that learning at Emerson is not a "hit-or-miss" situation. Emerson teachers follow the general curriculum guide issued by the city's board of education, and they do use textbooks, perhaps 25 percent of the time. The major difference is that day-to-day lesson plans are left flexible so that the timely quality of the daily newspaper can be used in teaching basic knowledge.

Wilson acknowledges that a certain amount of individual teacher creativity is essential in the program, but he also feels that using the newspaper is in part an acquired skill. In their workshops Emerson staff members show other teachers how to be alert to possible lesson topics and activities. Teachers are told to ask themselves what skill they want to teach and to look for material that teaches that skill.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Much emphasis is placed on blending subject matter. One article, utilized to its fullest, may be used to teach social studies, language arts, and math lessons. With practice, teachers become adept at using the newspaper approach.

Another practical consideration in implementing NIC is providing the newspapers. It is essential that every child has his own paper on a daily basis. At Emerson the *Globe-Democrat* has furnished the paper the past two years at a generous subscription rate. Funding for the subscriptions has come from Title I resources and from money saved by not buying workbooks. The Emerson staff found workbooks unnecessary when newspapers were used.

In developing curriculum, the Emerson faculty relies primarily on the newspaper, but they also incorporate other types of materials--texts, resource books, audiovisuals--into their classes. The role of the newspaper in the Emerson curriculum varies. Sometimes teachers use the newspaper as the major instructional tool while at other times it is used as enrichment and motivational material. The Emerson staff believes this flexibility makes the newspaper a useful tool in any classroom situation.

A newspaper may be a common, everyday part of our lives, but as an educational vehicle its potential is just being revealed at Emerson school.

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 085 735 - **An Evaluation of the Iowa "Newspapers in the Classroom of a Free Society" Workshops and an Assessment of the Impact of Newspaper Instruction.** By Elbert Pittenger Daniel. 105 pp. Document available from University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 (Order No. 73-610, microfilm $4.00, xerography $10.00). Daniel reports on a study of workshops designed to teach educators the value of using adult newspapers as instructional materials, and to train teachers in methods of using newspapers in their teaching.

ED 080 409 - **How To Use Daily Newspapers. How To Do It Series, Number 5.** By Howard H. Cummings and Harry Bard. 7 pp. MF - $.75, HC - available from National Council for the Social Studies, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 - $.25. Suggestions on how to use the newspaper in the social studies classroom are given in this instruction sheet. A brief selected bibliography is included.

ED 078 382 - **The Newspaper as an Instructional Medium.** By Laura S. Johnson. 11 pp. MF - $.75, HC - $1.50. This paper discusses two questions: (1) How can newspapers be established as acceptable classroom reading materials in the secondary schools? and (2) Why, until recently, have newspapers been so little used in the secondary schools?

ED 077 992 - **Evaluation of "A Newspaper In My Classroom" Project at Secord School, 1972.** By Marilyn Reid. 18 pp. MF - $.75, HC - $1.50. "A Newspaper In My Classroom" project was conducted by a fifth grade teacher with her class for four months. Results of the study indicate that the project had desirable effects on the students.

For further information, write:

Alfred Wilson, Principal
Emerson School
20th and Benton Streets
Granite City, Illinois 62040

Alfred Wilson is currently writing a book which will be entitled "The Upward Spiral". It will be a "how-to" book on using the Newspaper in the Classroom approach. Wilson and his staff are available for workshops. People interested in the book or the workshops can contact Wilson at the above address.

HOW TO ORDER ERIC DOCUMENTS

The complete document may be ordered from:

ERIC Document Reproduction Service
P.O. Drawer O
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Order by ED number and specify whether you want hardcopy, HC (A photoreproduction of the original), or microfiche, MF (A card of microfiche). To read MF, you need a microfiche reader, available at most libraries. Payment must accompany orders under $10.00, and a 50¢ handling charge must be added to all orders.

If you know of other significant practices write a one page description, including the name and address of a person to contact for further information, and send to:

PROFILES OF PROMISE
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302